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FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9496
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000382

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/17/2019

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION MEETINGS BROKEN UP BY POLICE

Classified By: Ambassador William J. Garvelink for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) In two separate cases in the past week, Kinshasa police broke up opposition political meetings. On April 12, police prevented approximately 40 AMP and opposition MPs from meeting, apparently as the group was considering the creation of a political movement under the leadership of outgoing National Assembly President Vital Kamerhe. Diplomatic sources have told us that as many as 135 MPs would support a new political formation led by Kamerhe. In the second incident, police turned away members of the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS) party, who had planned to stage a party congress April 15. While the police action against the UDPS supporters was disturbing, the underlying problem appears to have been an internal UDPS dispute between a faction loyal to long-time party president Etienne Tshisekedi and another group favoring a more activist stance from the party. End Summary.

Kamerhe Supporters Harassed

¶2. (C) Kinshasa police broke up a meeting of a group of 40 national AMP and opposition parliamentarians at a Kinshasa restaurant on April 12. One of the participants, Jean-Bosco Barihima, told post that he arrived at the meeting, as the police began to forcibly disperse the MPs. The police prevented Barihima from entering the venue, so he observed agitated policemen chasing those inside the restaurant out on to the street. The group had reportedly been waiting for the arrival of outgoing National Assembly President Vitale Kamerhe to discuss the creation of a new political movement. Press reports and diplomatic sources indicate that the group later met at Kamerhe's home. Several diplomatic contacts told PolCouns that the new movement has the support of as many as 135 parliamentarians. Officials for the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC) party have reportedly also contacted Kamerhe to discuss the possibility of political collaboration.

UDPS Congress

¶3. (SBU) The Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS) had planned to hold a party congress April 15 in Kinshasa. However, police prevented participants from entering the building where the congress was to have taken place. (Note: UDPS currently is not represented in parliament, as it boycotted the 2006 election. End Note.) Attempting to observe the party congress, EmbOff was also turned away by police. A UDPS advisor, Aka Mansia, told us that the police were operating under orders from Kinshasa Governor Andre

Kimbuta. Apparently, Kimbuta had rescinded an authorization for the congress. One of the organizers, Jean-Joseph Mukendi, claimed that the police have abducted five protocol members of the party and that they are currently in detention. Mukendi said that the congress later convened in a private home in Kinshasa.

14. (C) MONUC and western diplomatic missions characterized the conflict surrounding the aborted party congress as an internal UDPS struggle. Those loyal to ailing party president Etienne Tshisekedi, who is under medical care in Belgium, reportedly rejected the decision by another UDPS faction to hold the party congress without Tshisekedi's blessing. (Comment: Regardless of the internal party rules and procedures, it does appear that the Congolese authorities infringed on the rights of the party organizers to freely assemble. End Comment.)

Comment

15. (C) Following his fall from grace within the ruling coalition, it is not surprising that Kamerhe would consider establishing a rival political formation. It appears the rebel AMP and opposition parliamentarians have carefully chosen to establish a "movement," rather than a new political party. Any MP who changes parties, automatically loses his seat; on the other hand, there are no such restrictions on "movements." On the UDPS side, there is indeed a power struggle between a group that views Tshisekedi as the supreme leader of the party, and a group that wants to move forward

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without the long-time UDPS leader. Most disturbingly, the police, apparently acting on orders from the Kinshasa Governor, intervened to prevent political gatherings in two separate cases over the past week.

GARVELINK